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Blessed Are Ye That Sacrifice



St. John x. 1-5, 7-16

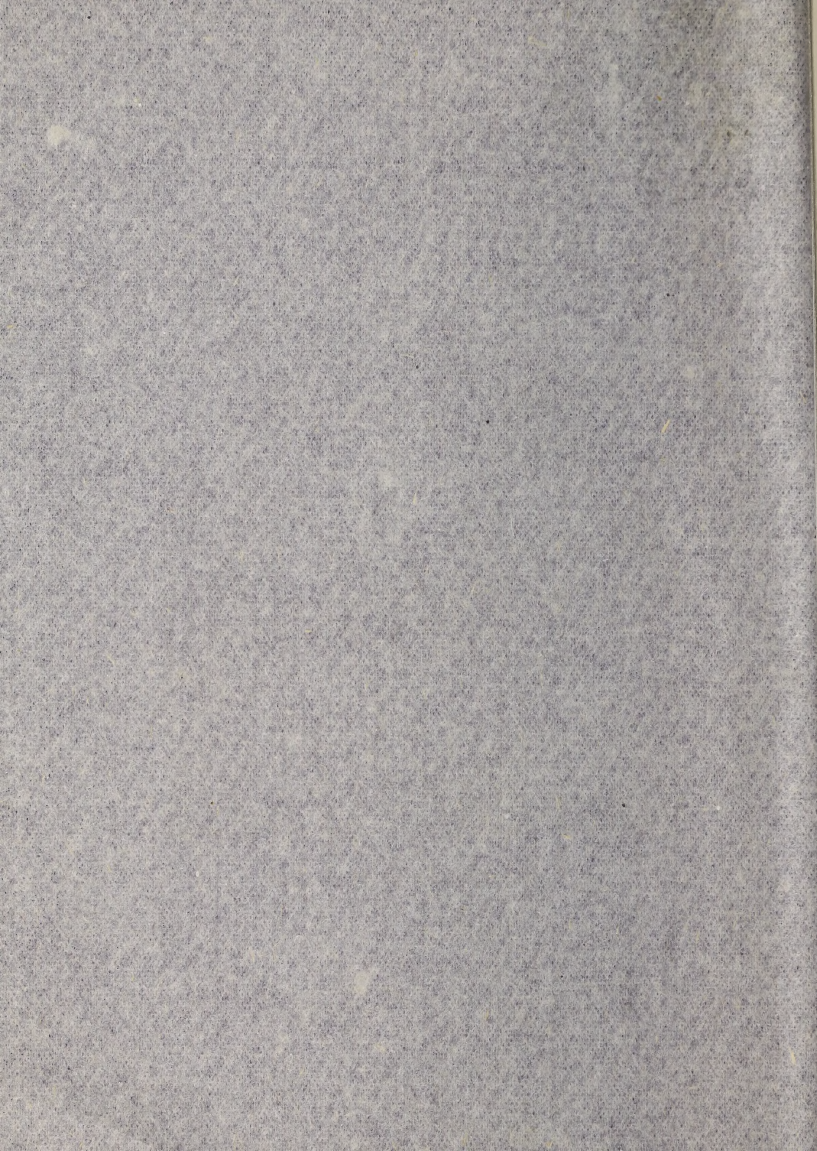


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The Good Shepherd Sibeth His Life





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“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”—
John x. 1-5, 7-18.

The Good Shepherd

† † †

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—1 John III. 16.

† † †

LONG before the break of day, the ancient shepherd arose—joyful and singing. The sheep knew his voice, and leaped forth past the porter, while the little lambs skipped to and fro.

Over the sunny slope he went—always before them, to choose the way, and to guard against venomous serpents. Up the turfy mountain side he climbed, higher and higher, looking for tender shoots, and tasty sweet bits. Slowly along the narrow pass—hard by the great gulf—he crept, ever in front,—calling and playing sweet music, and all but losing his balance on the dizzy height, from the treacherous blast, to protect the timid crowding sheep,—until he reached the shady little spring, gushing through a rent in the rock. Quickly he walled it up, making a quiet pool. And, oh, what cool, still waters to gladden and revive!

Down the rugged winding path he turned, still ahead, to hold them back with his outstretched arm and crook—lest they fall into a deep rut, or rush headlong over the ragged cliff. Then through the deep defile he passed,

without delay, for fear a great storm should suddenly change the dry water course into a mighty flood—a terrible, rushing, roaring sea of water—sweeping before it trees, rocks, bridges and his entire flock. Soon he came to fat green pastures in the fertile valley. A little in advance, with strong hands, he pulled up poisonous plants, carefully avoiding the deadly scratch. All of a sudden, the quick piercing eye of an eagle, soaring far above in the pale blue sky, spied a weak newborn lamb. The watchful shepherd, however, heard its cruel scream, and knew its swift flight. Bravely, he stood over the little prey; and, with one rude thrust of his sharp pointed rod, hurled the king of birds dead at his feet.

He led them now to the fountain of sweet waters. They drank abundantly, and lay down peaceably in the shadow of a high bank. While he was busy closing up dens and holes, a ravenous wolf sprang forth from the thicket. Loud and long he called. The sheep rushed with all their strength into a solid mass, holding fast the foe, until it was slain.

† † †

Presently thick clouds appeared. He hastened—the shortest way—through the habitation of cruelty. In this lonely desolate region, instantly, a foul blood-thirsty robber fell violently upon him. Was he afraid? Not at all! The brutal murderer, instead of killing the shepherd and seizing the flock, barely escaped with his

life. On and on he traveled, reaching a great rock, in time, for shelter from the terrible wind, which raged and lashed the sand with dreadful fury. At last, just as the first drops were falling, he reached the fold.

He counted. Alas! One little lamb was missing. Did he wait for supper? Far from it! Though weary and hungry and footsore, out into the pouring rain, out into the blackness of night, out into the pitiless hail, out into the awful thunder and lightning, he went. Hour after hour he searched,—running fearlessly here and there, and calling it by name,—with only one thought—to save. And, lo, what joy—unspeakable joy!—as he lifted the wet, torn, little lamb out of a deep cleft, and warmed it with his coat, and bore it safely on his shoulders—above the rising stream—without a thought of being carried away, or of cold and fever and death.

Then, far into the night, with eye and heart and hand, he bathed the weak and feeble with refreshing oil; he soothed the bruised and broken with healing ointment; he restored the sick and dying with milk and honey. They licked his hands and coat and crook, and lay down at his feet to rest.

† † †

But could he sleep? Never! as long as there was a *thief*, and *other sheep* outside the fold. Never! as long as there was the faintest cry, “Come over, and help us.” Never! as long as there was occasion to lay down *his life*—Never!

NOW, who was this good shepherd? Said Jesus unto them, "I am the good shepherd": "I lay down my life for the sheep."

† † †

He did not go to Jerusalem for the rich and noble, or take by force; He just walked along the road or by the sea, and said, graciously, to the humble and lowly and obscure, "Follow me." They knew His voice. Speedily they followed Him. And He led them into rich pastures of experience, beside pure springs of thought, along lonely paths of service, and back to the fold of peace.

† † †

He called them by name. Indeed, He gave them new names. "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas," He said; "Thou art weak and uncertain: thou shalt be as firm and steady as a rock. I believe in you." And although Peter failed miserably, he went with his Lord into prison, and to death. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Sometimes, His followers saw only hunger and thirst in a desert place, and cried out, "Send the multitude away"; but He saw twelve baskets full more than they needed, and much more, "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," and said, "Give ye them to eat." "I

am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Other times, they saw only meat and drink and raiment: and then He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

When His favorite disciples wanted to talk only about great things—to great people, and rebuked affectionate mothers for bringing their little ones to Him, He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." He always had a smile and a touch for little barefoot boys and girls that made them happy. Often He took them gently on His knee, and put His loving arms around them, and kissed them tenderly, and told them beautiful stories for hours. "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

† † †

One day, a poor sinful woman, tired and weary of the world, came in the midday heat to draw water,—expecting only common well water, perhaps none—for the well was deep; at the most, only a small bottle full, and that with great labor and sweat. Said Jesus unto her, courteously—not as a servant, but as an equal and friend—"Give me to drink"; and then, He gave her a whole well of water. And this pure, sweet, sparkling cold water was so refreshing that, immediately, she forgot all about her old waterpot, and the deep well, and the weary journey, and her past life; and ran all

the way back to get the whole city to drink from this fresh fountain of everlasting life.

When He entered the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and a Syrophenician woman came near and fell at His feet, and lifted up her face with tears in her eyes, He did not say, "Send her away, send her away!" He never said that. No, "Go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." Yes, truly, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." When He gently touched "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," they were healed. When He kindly spoke the word, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," the sick of the palsy was made whole. When He earnestly prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me," even the dead came to life again. Verily, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

† † †

Then, too, at darkest night, was He a hireling? Nay, listen! "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep": "I lay down my life for the sheep": "I lay down my life, that I might take it again": "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Four times He uttered this same, mighty, supreme truth, and then, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Ah, this was the charm of Calvary's cross; this was the secret of His being the good shepherd—this dying to

save! He never owned a house, or a piece of ground: He never held a mortgage, or possessed a jewel: He never wrote down anything—except, to stoop down and write on the ground; but, He did lay down *His life*—for the *other sheep*: and no library in the world is able to contain the books that have been written. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

† † †

DES, indeed! This is the eternal secret of being a good shepherd. It is not possible—and never has been—to be a good man or a good woman, unless the *other sheep*, and lay down *my life* always come first. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”: “Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

† † †

Anything less than this is suicidal, criminal, damnable. As long as there are thieves and robbers stalking about that would murder the innocent and steal the clothes of the dead, and as long as there are strangers and hirelings waiting to flee at the faintest sound of danger, no one is safe. The cruel, blasphemous despot slaughters in cold blood the innocent and helpless; he crucifies the old and frail; and buries alive the bravest and best: “They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” The trustless, godless anarchist bows before no authority; he knows no higher law than the law of his own

self-will; and turns traitor to the highest good: "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!" The cursed, contemptible spy "calls evil good, and good evil; puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter": She is "nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." The lazy, selfish, devilish deserter "seeth the wolf coming," and, without any qualm of conscience, "leaveth the sheep, and fleeth"—defiled and disgraced for ever. "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye."

† † †

But, there are others—many of them. Oh, how different! Thank God for them.

† † †

The valiant man gladly obeys the eternal, immutable, divine law of sacrifice—a law he did not make, and cannot unmake. He chooses the rough, steep, perilous path that leads direct to Calvary. He salutes the last brave dash for freedom with a heroism and a gallantry that words can never picture or describe—not for ease or fame or treasure, but for others. Kept brave and true by a mother's prayer—faithful unto death—he receives the crown of life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The beloved physician hears the still small voice, saying, "Care for my weak ones." Swiftly she leaves her

happy home; parts from the dearest loved ones; goes to a far-away strand; and there devotes all her days to the welfare of filthy, diseased lepers. She pours healing balm and consolation into aching, weary hearts. She sings soft sweet songs of joy. In a moment, she passes into their lives; they are her friends, and she is their delight—a heavenly benediction for evermore. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” The true pastor is full of good news, glad tidings of great joy; and puts his whole heart and soul into other lives. Like Peter of old, he nobly welcomes, “Feed my lambs; Feed my sheep; Feed my sheep.” He finds his way into the homes of the poor, and rocks the cradle while the tired mother takes a walk. He is not content, and never can be, until every starved, ragged, destitute, lost child—crying, oh, so piteously!—has an equal chance, in the rivalry of life, to climb to the highest heights of social, economic, intellectual and spiritual good. “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” He lays aside the most crushing cares to write a letter of sympathy to the bereaved and the heartbroken. All night long he is near the dying when friends are far away, waiting, watching, praying, to comfort and sustain in the last, strange, lonely moment when the soul cries out, “Oh, do not leave me!” “He that keepeth thee will not slumber.”

HOW wonderful to be alive today, when one's sacrifice counts for so much more than ever before!

† † †

The immortal heroine is always doing lovely little things; always conscious that the one next is carrying a heavier burden, and fighting a harder battle. When dreadful disease carries away its myriads, she is not afraid to die. She gives up everything she has. "Behind the dark clouds," she says, "the sun still shines; and beyond the deepest gloom ever glows the brightness of the Father's face." She saves the lives of many that are sick, and many that would have been sick, and then sacrifices her own life for the cause of humanity. The world is richer because she lived. Others are better because she was good. To live on and on in the memory of hearts that love is not to die; it is to live the larger, richer, glorified life that lifts one higher and higher while ages numerous as the drops of ocean are rolling on. *"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ."*

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Blessed Are Ye That Sacrifice

